Tuesday
November 7, 2017

TODAY **84 / 53** Partly sunny
WEDNESDAY **56 / 43** 60% chance of rain
THURSDAY **63 / 46** Partly sunny

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EXPANDED COVERAGE: TEXAS CHURCH SHOOTING

FAMILY DISPUTE TIED TO MASSACRE

Gunman sent threatening texts to estranged in-law, who attended the church.

Vice President Pence, wife will visit Wednesday, meet with families, the injured.

Eight members of one family, pastor's 14-year-old daughter among 26 dead.

FBI agents conduct a search for evidence Monday on FM 539 at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, where a gunman killed 26 people Sunday. Keep up with the latest developments and see videos and photos on **statesman.com.**. JAY JANNER / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

By Tony Plohetski and Ryan Autullo
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SUTHERLAND SPRINGS — A domestic dispute involving an estranged couple might have led to the shooting at a church that left 26 dead, officials said Monday, as they described a wrenching crime scene in which parents used their bodies to shield their children from bullets.

As the toll at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs began coming into focus for the grieving community, Wilson County Sheriff Joe Tackitt said officials had removed the bodies from the church and were working to formally identify them. One family, the Holcombes, lost eight members spanning three generations.

> **'Wherever you walked in the church, it was death.'**
> Joe Tackitt
> Wilson County sheriff

"Wherever you walked in the church, it was death," Tackitt said. "It's hard enough to see an adult. But when you see babies – I'm talking, you know, 3, 4, 5 and 6 years old, 10 years old – it's just hard."

An 18-month-old toddler and a 77-year-old were among the dead. They include the daughter of the church's pastor. Frank Pomeroy, who was out of town Sunday, identified her as 14-year-old Annabelle, whom they called Belle.

Pomeroy addressed reporters through tears during an afternoon news conference, saying, "Our sweet Belle would not have been able to deal with all the family she lost yesterday."

Vice President Mike Pence announced Monday that he and his wife, Karen, will travel to Texas on Wednesday. Pence tweeted that he will meet with families, the injured and law enforcement. President Donald Trump is on his first presidential trip to Asia.

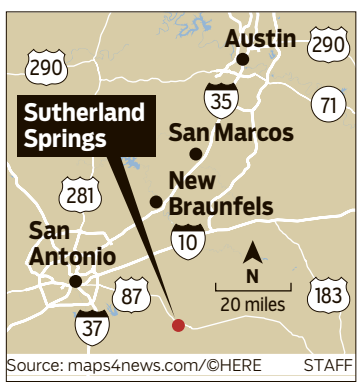
Law enforcement officials said they are still trying to uncover details about what led Devin Kelley, a 26-year-old who had served in the Air Force, to go on the shooting spree. They said his in-laws attended the church. His estranged wife also went there from time to time, they said.

Texas Department of Public Safety regional director Freeman Martin said investigators have learned that before Sunday's attack, Kelley had sent threatening text messages to his mother-in-law. He did not elaborate on when the messages were sent or what they said.

Officials said that because of that evidence, they have no reason to think the shooting was related to terrorism or religious views.

Gov. Greg Abbott, appearing

Shooting continued on **A6**



Source: maps4news.com/©HERE STAFF

ALSO INSIDE
» Two men hailed as heroes for confronting, chasing Kelley, **A4**
» **Ken Herman:** Looking for answers — and a law, **A4**
» Area churches want to be welcoming, but also safe, **A5**
» A look at some of the lives cut down by the church gunman, **A5**

THE SUSPECT

Suspect bought weapons despite violent history

Air Force failed to submit criminal record to FBI, has launched probe.

By Sean Collins Walsh, Jeremy Schwartz and Eric Dexheimer
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Kelley

ALSO INSIDE
» Law should have halted purchase, **A8**

Devin Patrick Kelley – the 26-year-old New Braunfels resident who on Sunday perpetrated the deadliest mass shooting in Texas history – should not have been able to buy the assault-style rifle he used to kill 26 people at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, according to gun and military experts.

In 2012, a military court convicted Kelley of assaulting his wife and stepson, sentencing him to one year behind bars and leading to a bad-conduct discharge. But that conviction, which federal law says should have dis-

Suspect continued on **A6**

Rebecca Thompson of Santa Fe, Texas, prays Monday at a memorial near the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, where 26 churchgoers now need funerals. JAY JANNER / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

NATION & WORLD, A10

Trump, in Japan, has hard line on N. Korea

The president, at a news conference with Premier Shinzo Abe, said "we will not stand" for Pyongyang's continued weapons testing over Japanese territory.

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THE TOWN

Shock, grief for neighbors after tragedy

'I've got friends that are dead, and I don't even know which ones.'

By Elizabeth Findell, Ryan Autullo and Tony Plohetski
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SUTHERLAND SPRINGS — When someone died in Sutherland Springs recently, the whole town came together to raise money for a proper funeral.

That's the town Terri Smith knew when she stepped out of her car Sunday outside the Valero gas station that houses her restaurant, Theresa's Kitchen. She heard gunshots.

"That's common," she said. "They'll shoot a rattlesnake out here."

But this sounded different.

Smith looked across the street and saw a man outside First Baptist Church, shooting inward and then running into the church. The gunfire came in

Town continued on **A7**